

ROLLING STONE

Linda Ronstadt

The Million-Dollar Woman

THE RAPE OF

Jimi Hendrix

A Scandal of Lawsuits and Laundered Money

THE NATURAL ACTS
OF WINTER

Outside!

Adventure by
Tim Cahill,

Fiction by
Michael Rogers,
plus Hardware-
Software and
the Armchair
Rambler

A PIECE OF



THE RAINBOW

How a Calculating Band of Lawyers, Promoters, Cons and Other Vultures Have Plundered the Grave of Jimi Hendrix • By JERRY HOPKINS

PART ONE

THE DEATH

IN THE SIX years since Jimi Hendrix died, his legacy has become one of contemporary culture's most heavily trafficked "natural" resources. At last count there were four filmed documentaries; six books (one each in France and Germany, two each in the U.S. and U.K.); one magazine and uncounted boutiques and discotheques named after his song, "Foxy Lady"; eight albums from Warners and an amazing 49 bootleg LPs; two Jimi Hendrix archives (in Seattle and Amsterdam); a Jimi Hendrix Memorial Foundation (one of the sloppier rip-offs, about which more soon); and thousands of posters and pendants and T-shirts and buttons and busts, authorized and otherwise.

In addition, by spring of 1976, there'd been 165 different legal actions involving the Hendrix estate and perhaps as many more involving related figures, such as Warner Brothers and the estate of Michael Jeffrey, Hendrix's manager who died in 1973. Settlements have ranged widely, from \$300,000 in back royalties that Mitch Mitchell claims he wrested from the Hendrix estate to \$169 for telephone calls made by the distraught mother of an actress who appeared with Hendrix in one of his documentary films. A Swedish court recently ruled that Jimi Hendrix is the father of a six-year-old boy born to one Eva Sundkvist. Dozens of other actions are still pending and the lawyer keeping the running total says it isn't over yet.

It's funny the way most people love the dead. Once you are dead, you are made for life.
—Jimi Hendrix

Eighteen months after he made this offhand statement, Jimi Hendrix was dead. So many of his friends and associates paraded through London's funky but fashionable Notting Hill Gate section in the month before he died, September 1970, it was as if the cliché about life passing before a victim's eyes had come true.

Jack Hammer, a musician and composer ("Great Balls of Fire") Hendrix had known in his early days in Greenwich

Jerry Hopkins is now at work on a biography of Raquel Welch.

Village, was there. His rap is a doozy; it goes on and on until, by his count, there are 22 coincidences in their lives, including an astonishing physical resemblance. Hendrix, he says, told him: "There are such things as two people who are so identical it's as if they were cloned one from the other." But Hammer believed it was nothing more than coincidence "until Hendrix died on my birthday, September 18th, two days after our conversation. The day we talked, the 16th, sitting at the same table at the Speakeasy with Jimi and me was Big Mama Cass, Janis Joplin and Jimi's manager, Mike Jeffrey, all now dead except me."

Hammer wrote and is intent on starring in a musical about Jimi's life, *The Jimi Hendrix Story*, on Broadway. "I was born to do it," he says. "If I can simply remind Jimi's fans of a great star whose fire burned out too soon, that'll make me happy."

Three days before he died, Hendrix appeared backstage at Ronnie Scott's, a nightclub in Soho where Eric Burdon was singing with his new band, War. Burdon and Hendrix had much in common, including Michael Jeffrey, who'd managed Burdon and the Animals before Hendrix. Hendrix told Burdon he wanted to sit in but he was too stoned. He did return the following night, straight enough to play. Burdon said later that Hendrix "really got into the last number, 'Tobacco Road,' but he never stepped out from War's back line."

That was the last music Hendrix played. Three days after the guitarist's death, Burdon was sitting in a BBC television studio, claiming that Hendrix had killed himself and that he, Burdon, was to go on, carrying "Jimi's legacy."

Also in London that month was Alan Douglas, a record producer who'd been associated with such diverse characters as Duke Ellington, Charlie Mingus, John Coltrane, Tim Leary, John Sinclair and Lenny Bruce, and whose New York apartment was a block from Hendrix's. Starting sometime in 1969 and up to the time Hendrix left for Europe a year or so later, they occasionally met at all-night jam sessions in New York. Some nights Hendrix played with guitarist John McLaughlin, then assembling the first Mahavishnu Orchestra; and Khalid Yasin (Larry Young), a mainstay, with McLaughlin, of the Tony Williams Lifetime; Stephen Stills, Johnny Winter and Little Feat's Lowell George; and his old friends Billy Cox on bass and Buddy Miles on drums.

Douglas claims today that he began taking notes during those sessions. He says he introduced Hendrix to some of those



musicians and claims he was marking down Hendrix's comments about various takes, insists that although he wasn't acting officially as producer, they were definitely planning the next album together.

Hendrix left New York at the end of August 1970, and played—with his original drummer, Mitch Mitchell, and Billy Cox—at the Isle of Wight, then went on a short tour of the Continent and ended up in London, where he supposedly met Alan Douglas and spent the weekend with him and his wife at Roger Daltrey's house. Then, Douglas says, he and his wife borrowed a friend's flat and Hendrix moved in with them.

Another version has Hendrix meeting an old girlfriend, Monika Danneman, in Germany while on tour and having her fly to London ahead of him. Which she apparently did, taking the flat in the Hotel Samarkand in Notting Hill Gate where Hendrix died. Hendrix took another room at a Park Lane hotel, the Cumberland. Other "witnesses" swear Hendrix spent some of his last nights in flats all over London, passing the hours with strange girls and drugs, the two things he was constantly being offered and seldom found the strength or inclination to refuse. The stories about his whereabouts that final week overlap and contradict each other, but it is probable he didn't spend two consecutive nights in any one place.

The day after he played at Ronnie Scott's, Hendrix reportedly called Henry Steingarten, his attorney, to say he wanted to leave Jeffrey, no matter what it cost. The same day, Douglas says, he and Hendrix went to Heathrow Airport,

"I Don't Live Today": Jimi Hendrix is laid to rest in Seattle, September 28th, 1970

where Douglas caught a plane to New York for a meeting with Steingarten.

But Douglas never met Steingarten. When news of Hendrix's death reached America the next day, he returned to London, where he waited for more than a week for the coroner's report, then joined the others who accompanied Jimi's body to Seattle for burial.

Douglas is well-known as the man behind the two best-selling Hendrix albums of 1975, which both offered previously unreleased songs that Douglas says he discovered and/or created while wading through nearly 800 hours of raw tape left over from Hendrix's long nights in the recording studio. He accomplished this by taking some of the unmixed, unbalanced and usually unfinished songs, and stripping away all the tracks but Hendrix's. He then hired New York studio musicians and backup singers and overdubbed new parts. This wasn't a new idea, but when the first Douglas-produced Hendrix LP was released in January 1975, it drew fire from Hendrix purists.

The reviewers and feature writers of the rock press were far more accepting. They, along with many others, noted the unusual circumstances under which *Crash Landing* was pasted together, but they also said they liked it. And so did the public. Almost five years after his death, Hendrix had a Top Ten album.

The second album, *Midnight Lightning*, was released in November 1975, and it, too, rapidly climbed the record charts.

(Originally, everyone hoped for seven or eight or more new albums, but after two, Douglas said there just weren't any more salvageable songs. So for number three, Douglas remixed a number of songs from some posthumous albums Warners had released earlier—arranging them, he says, as Hendrix originally planned. This time there were no overdubs and the sidemen were Buddy Miles and Billy Cox. The album, called *Freedom*,

is set for release next spring.)

Warners mounted a tasteful publicity campaign for each of the new releases and recalled five earlier posthumous albums. Douglas says this was because those records were sloppily produced and mixed. Of course, by recalling so much product, Warners was also clearing the record bins of surplus Hendrix material.

And what of the oft-praised McLaughlin tapes? Douglas originally wanted them to be on the first album release, but McLaughlin withheld his permission.

Douglas says that once this final "jazz-

style" (instrumental) album has been assembled, his job will be complete. "There will be no more inferior reference points for Hendrix fans," he says. "Every album legitimately on the market Hendrix himself would dig."

Douglas is not entirely altruistic, however. On the first album, *Crash Landing*, not only was he listed as the record's coproducer (with Tony Bongiovi, who waded through all the tapes and did most of the initial editing), he also put himself down as cowriter with Hendrix on five of the album's eight songs, thereby

claiming a healthy slice of the composer's royalties along with half the producer's.

When asked why, Douglas seems nervous—and with some interviewers, testy—saying there were "copyright problems," that it was a "political situation, a confusion between the estate and the people administering the publishing." He chooses to say no more. But he did not claim such royalties on the subsequent albums.

Another figure in London that final week was Ed Chalpin, a young record promoter Hendrix had known in his pre-Experience days.

When Jeffrey got Hendrix to sign recording, publishing and management contracts in September 1966, he had every reason to believe he had the man tied up. But he was wrong. Hendrix's first album, *Are You Experienced*, was released in September 1967; a month after that, Ed Chalpin filed suit against Hendrix and several record companies, including Warner Bros.

To back up his claim, Chalpin produced a one-page agreement, executed in 1965, in which Hendrix agreed to play, sing and produce records for Chalpin and Chalpin's PPX Enterprises for a period of five years in exchange for a two percent royalty. Although Hendrix was never recorded by PPX except as a background guitarist for Curtis Knight, eventually Chalpin would release, repackage and rerelease at least 14 albums. The way the first was titled, *Get That Feeling: Jimi Hendrix Plays and Curtis Knight Sings*, released by Capitol Records, shows how the Hendrix name was exploited.

A settlement was reached in about six months while the case was being tried in a New York court. Warners gambled on Hendrix's future earnings and agreed to pay everything. This included a two percent override to be paid to Chalpin for Hendrix's first three albums, two of which had already been released and a third which was in production. Chalpin was further guaranteed that the two percent would amount to \$200,000 and was given the rights to Hendrix's fourth LP—the *Band of Gypsies* album, released about two years later—which Chalpin sold to Capitol. Eventually, Chalpin would collect more than \$1 million.

Flushed with victory, Chalpin took his claims abroad, bringing suits against Hendrix and two London-based companies, Track and Polydor. Instantly, both companies put a hold on all future royalties due Hendrix and they too filed suit against Hendrix.

Jeffrey panicked and, with the approval of Henry Steingarten, Hendrix's lawyer and the partner of his own lawyer, Steve Weiss, got Hendrix to sign a piece of paper indemnifying Jeffrey from all future judgments that might go against Hendrix in Britain.

This is where things stood in September 1970 when Hendrix was bouncing around London like a pinball gone wild. He was to meet with solicitors representing both sides of the case on Wednesday, September 16th. But he stood them up.

The stories continue to crisscross and contradict, with perhaps dozens of people claiming they shared Hendrix's final days. Whatever happened, it seems clear that he returned to share a simple meal with Monika Danneman late Thursday. At 1:30 a.m., Monika Danneman apparently took Hendrix to (in her words) "some people's flat. They were not his



'When I rushed into the bedroom,' Monika Danneman said later, 'even before I looked at him, I knew something was terribly wrong. The lamp cast this eerie glow. There was a hush in the room, as though time had stood still.'

friends and he did not like them. He told me he did not want me to go with him, so I dropped him off there and picked him up an hour later, just after three."

Returning to their flat, Danneman made Hendrix a tuna sandwich and Hendrix wrote "The Story of Life," a poem Eric Burdon would pronounce a suicide note. Others, including Jeffrey, disagree, claiming that dozens of Hendrix's poems and lyrics can be taken any way the reader wishes.

Monika Danneman points to the final stanza and says she agrees with Burdon:

*The story
Of life is quicker
Than the wink of an eye
The story of love
Is hello and goodbye
Until we meet again.*

She also told Curtis Knight, author of *Jimi: An Intimate Biography of Jimi Hendrix*, that she saw him empty a bottle of sleeping pills into his hand in her bedroom. She claims she grabbed the bottle away and soon after that Hendrix lay down to sleep.

For a while she said she watched him, until she thought he was asleep, then she took a sleeping pill herself. That was about 7:30 Friday morning.

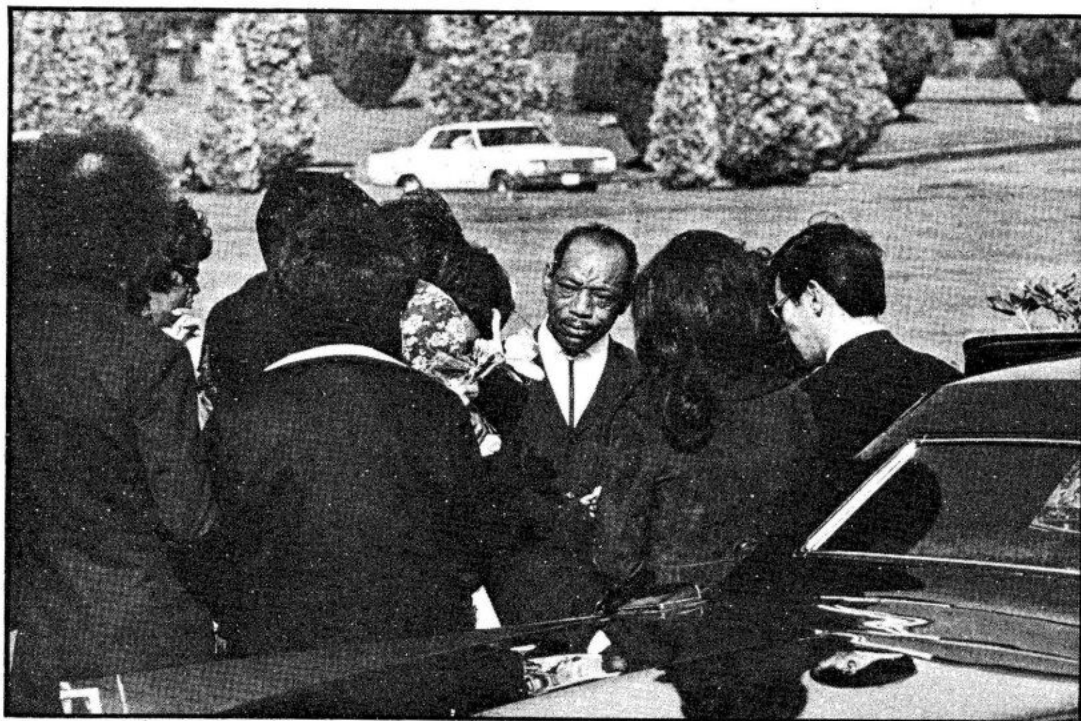
She told Knight: "I woke up again at about 10:20 and I couldn't sleep anymore. I wanted some cigarettes, but as Jimi did not like me to go out without telling him, I looked to see if he was awake. He was sleeping normally.

"Just before I went out I looked at him again, and there was sick on his nose and mouth. He was breathing and his pulse was beating. I checked it with mine and there was no difference. I put my shoes on quickly, grabbed my coat and ran across the street as quickly as I could.

"When I returned and approached the door of the flat, I sensed something was wrong. The door stuck this time, as it sometimes did, and I became very frightened. Finally I managed to get the door open, and when I rushed into the bedroom, even before I looked at him, I knew something was terribly wrong. There was only a lamp burning in the room, because I had turned the ceiling light off after I thought Jimi had gone to sleep. The lamp cast this eerie glow. There was a hush in the room as though time had stood still.

"My first impulse was to try to awaken him. I shook him again and again, frantically. I felt his face. It was cold."

Ten days later, a coroner's inquest ruled the death was due to suffocation caused by the inhalation of vomit, following barbiturate (Quinalbarbitone) intoxication. Was it suicide? "Insufficient evidence of circumstances" led the coroner to leave the question unresolved and to file an "open verdict."



Opposite: Jimi at the Monterey Pop festival, 1967. Above: Al Hendrix at his son's funeral.

PART TWO

THE LAWYERS

BOTH OF Angela Davis' male trial attorneys were black, but where one was obviously so, the other, Leo Branton, was often thought to be white. By studying the way each prospective juror responded to questioning by the two lawyers, by watching for the slightest involuntary eye movements, the smallest hand gestures, the team of psychologists hired by the Davis defense was able to spot hidden racial prejudices.

Branton had represented show people, such as Nat "King" Cole and Dorothy Dandridge, for eight years before retiring in 1968 with his wife to Mexico City. They'd planned to move to Sweden "to try their style of socialism." Branton canceled his plans to help 13 members of the Black Panther party who'd been arrested in Los Angeles. He served them without charge until he was called to the Angela Davis case. By then, he'd also begun representing Jimi Hendrix's father and controlling the Hendrix estate.

Branton got involved in the case

through Jimi's valet, Herbert Price, who had been Nat Cole's valet at one time. Price was in London when Hendrix died and he accompanied the body to Seattle, where he met Al Hendrix, a gentle, self-employed gardener who'd raised his son alone from age ten. The elder Hendrix informed Price that Michael Jeffrey had said there wouldn't be much of a legacy—all they'd been able to find was \$21,000 in cash. Alarmed, Price urged the guitarist's father to meet Leo Branton. Branton, he said, could work miracles.

Branton listened to the father's story, then went to New York to meet with Jeffrey and the estate's legal administrator, Henry Steingarten, returning to California with fire in his eyes. How, Branton puzzled, could Steingarten represent the Hendrix estate properly when Jeffrey was being represented by Steingarten's partner, Steve Weiss?

Branton met again with Al Hendrix, who gave him permission to do whatever he thought best. Branton states he went straight to Steingarten and threatened to take him before the Bar Association, charging conflict of interest, unless he resigned as the estate's administrator. For whatever reason, Steingarten did resign. Branton, meanwhile, had engaged two young, black attorneys, Ed Howard and Kenny Hagood. The deal was: Hagood would be the administrator of the estate, Howard would be the attorney of record, and Branton would mastermind the strat-

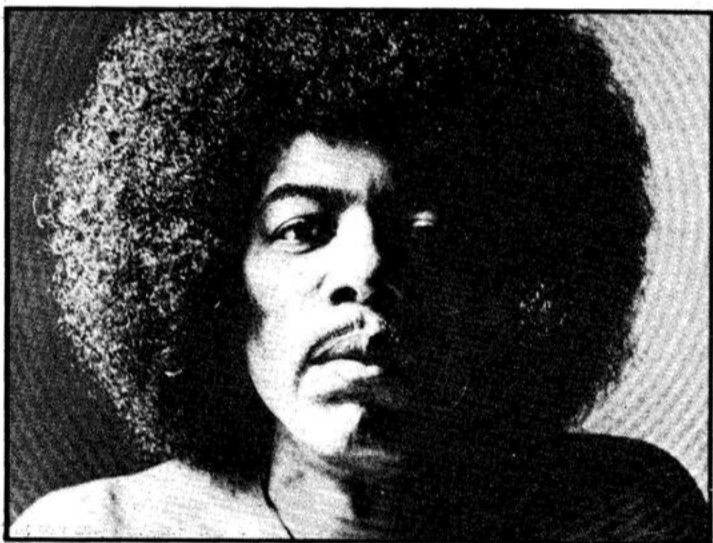
egy and argue the Hendrix cause in court.

One of the first things to be sorted out was the Electric Lady Studio in New York, jointly built by Hendrix and Jeffrey. The Hendrix lawyers felt the estate needed a solid cash position from which to operate and decided to sell. Jeffrey agreed to pay the Hendrix estate \$240,000, the figure he and Hendrix originally invested. He also agreed to assume responsibility for what remained of a \$300,000 loan from Warner Bros. Maxwell Cohen, who represents the Jeffrey estate in the U.S., says the studio is now operating at a comfortable profit.

Another matter was the Chalpin trial. Chalpin was complaining that the *Band of Gypsies* album, released in 1970, wasn't as good as he'd been promised, a claim which seemed laughable since it was the biggest Hendrix album up to that time.

At the conclusion of the trial the judge said Chalpin had no credibility and ordered him to pay the Hendrix estate's attorneys' fees (the loser always does so in England, unlike in the U.S.), and promptly. Chalpin agreed to pay Branton \$150,000. In addition, Chalpin was required to deliver to the Hendrix estate all

Some hinted darkly of Mafia involvement, indicating Hendrix's accounts were brutalized by professionals. They insisted that one of the guitarist's worries was the unavoidable Mafia scene in Greenwich Village where he'd lived.



FRED ANITA

the tapes he hadn't released. However, he was permitted to continue to exploit the albums already on the market. It was thought to be a fair settlement by both sides.

The Hendrix file remained active, the money poured in and washed out again. Some of the "losses" were great, as when Noel Redding and Mitch Mitchell, both members of the Experience, sued for royalties not paid on posthumous albums and said they hadn't been paid for their appearances in either of the Warners documentaries; Redding won \$100,000 and Mitchell \$300,000. Still, the value of the Hendrix estate increased until the \$21,000 in cash had become \$2 million.

The biggest asset was the music, of course—the hundreds of hours of unreleased tape. The estate had located nearly 600 hours in a warehouse in New Jersey and more was being held by a number of recording studios in London as well as the U.S., awaiting payment of bills for recording time.

Branton then got the unreleased tapes legally into the hands of Al Hendrix. After shopping around, Branton sold them to Presentaciones Musicales, S.A., a Panamanian corporation that had been founded in the Fifties by Branton's former client, Nat Cole, and jazz promoter Norman Granz. Then, as now, the corporation serves American companies as a tax haven, although Branton insists that P.M.S.A. got the world rights because "they offered us the best deal." (P.M.S.A. also owns world rights to Werner Erhard's est teaching program.)

Of course, P.M.S.A. cannot do business in the United States, so Branton had to find a company that would enter into an agreement with P.M.S.A. to make masters from the edited Hendrix tapes and market them through a U.S. distributor. The firm that got this contract was called Depaja Inc. Depaja then hired Alan Douglas to produce the records and made a deal with Warner Bros. to market the finished product.

Depaja is a New York corporation, incorporated March 28th, 1974, designed to carry on a variety of activities in entertainment, from production to management to marketing, but specifically to exploit the Hendrix material in the U.S. The officers are the two black lawyers Branton hired to represent the estate in New York, Ed Howard and Kenny Hagood, and Leo Branton himself. When pressed for details, Branton clams up, while Hagood and Howard claim the money "passes right through."

In their efforts to build the Hendrix legacy, there was one area that Branton, Hagood and Howard ruled out. This was the Yameta Trust Company, Ltd., an offshore holding company formed in 1967 by Jeffrey through his London at-

torney, John Hillman. It was started with a \$50,000 check from the Animals' record label, MGM, was based in the Bahamas and was designed, Eric Burdon says, to serve as a tax haven for funds that would await the musicians' retirement. When Jeffrey signed Hendrix, Redding and Mitchell, much of their money went to Nassau, too—although how Hendrix, an American citizen, could benefit from a British tax dodge was never made clear.

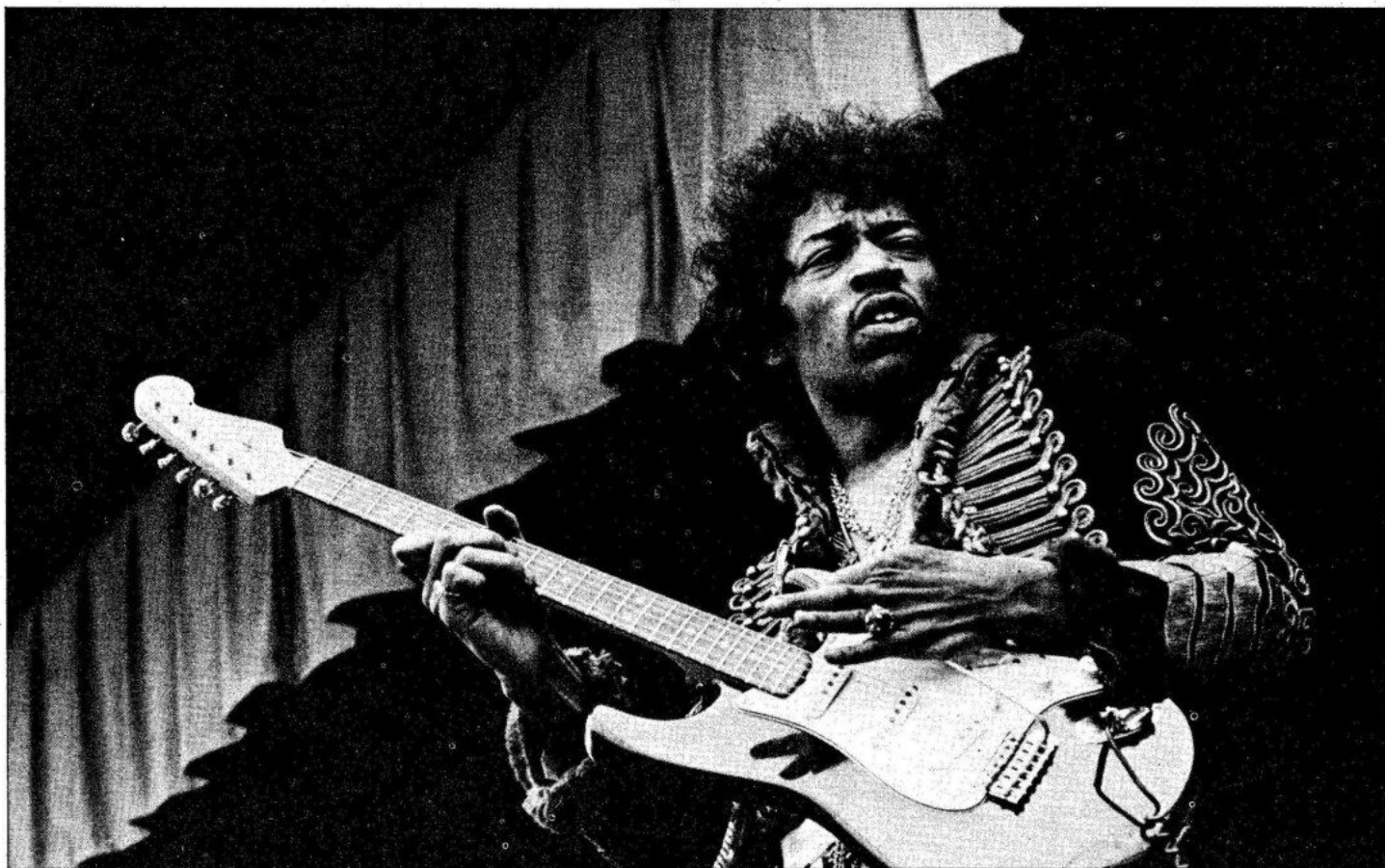
Yameta served another function as well—as the production company (ostensibly Jeffrey's) that originally was contracted by Warner Bros. to provide Hendrix's records. Even after that recording contract was renegotiated and Warners began dealing directly with Hendrix, all royalty checks—as well as some European performance fees—were sent to Hendrix care of Yameta's Bahamian address.

If the account was empty at the time of Hendrix's death, where did the money go? Hagood, Howard and Branton decided not to investigate Yameta, realizing that the legal battle would have to be fought in Britain and believing that even if any blame could be placed, there wouldn't be any money to collect and the estate would be out the cost of the fight.

But a personable, fast-talking attorney in Beverly Hills, Mickey Shapiro, did ask those questions. He claims that upwards of \$1 million gushed into the account, and that all of it gurgled out—without one immediately apparent penny ever going to anyone in the Jimi Hendrix Experience.

In 1974, Shapiro went to call on Sir Guy Henderson, a tall, thin, aristocratic former chief justice of the Bahamian Supreme Court who was Yameta's lawyer in the Bahamas and a member of Yameta's board of directors. When the meeting was over, Shapiro had an armful of documents which speak for themselves. Fifty-three were statements from the Bank of Nova Scotia in Nassau, where Yameta kept its wildly fluctuating and somewhat suspicious account, canceled checks, minutes of Yameta's board meetings, correspondence and statements from the Price-Waterhouse accounting firm (famous for its participation in counting ballots for the Academy Awards). Even Price-Waterhouse seemed confused, concluding its examination in 1968 with a barrage of questions. Whenever Mickey Shapiro pressed Sir Guy Henderson to explain any of these transactions, the former chief justice replied that he was merely following instructions.

A visit to Leon Dicker's office was no more satisfying. Dicker, Yameta's lawyer in New York and the Yameta/Experience paymaster, is a gregarious but suspicious Rotarian. His corner skyscraper office is decorated in American Bicentennial, with a stuffed marlin and autographed pictures of John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson looking down paternally from



Opposite: Mitch Mitchell and Noel Redding (r); Jimi with Buddy Miles at Winterland, 1968; Jack Hammer, Jimi's lookalike. Above: Jimi at a Monterey Pop rehearsal, 1967.

the walls. When one of Shapiro's associates requested a look at Yameta documents in New York, Dicker asked John Hillman in London for advice and Hillman said nothing doing. When I visited Dicker, he asked to see my driver's license, "so I'll know I'm not talking to the FBI or the CIA."

Whether this was a joke or he was serious is unimportant. The interview revealed little. He said Michael Jeffrey was only an employee of Yameta who had a contract with the holding company to "find talent," and when Warners renegotiated with Hendrix in 1968, Hendrix's and Jeffrey's involvement with Yameta ceased.

What of all the heavy check cashing and the large sums paid out after that date?

"Well," said Dicker, "Yameta continued to exist, you know, for stopovers and things like that. . . ."

The question remained: who owned Yameta? If Jeffrey and the members of the Experience were employees, who were the employers? John Hillman in London, of course, and possibly Sir Guy Henderson and Ralph Seligman in Nassau, all members of the Yameta board. But who did they answer to? Some say Yameta

was owned by Caicos Trust Company, Ltd., still another tax haven, named for one of the smaller Bahama Islands. And what was Caicos? No one was talking.

Others hinted darkly of Mafia involvement, indicating Hendrix's accounts were brutalized by professionals. They whispered of Jeffrey's fascination with the hoodlum type and insisted that one of the guitarist's worries was the unavoidable Mafia scene in Greenwich Village, where he lived and Electric Lady was built. Organized crime was also known to use Bahamian banks and, according to Ed Hagood and Kenny Howard, the Yameta account was used similarly; it was, they said, "just a sink hole into which the money was . . . well, not thrown, but . . . dry-cleaned." Most puzzling of all was the newspaper clipping found in the middle of the Yameta files, a story about a change in Mafia leadership in New York. All interesting, but proof of nothing; to date, no one has been able to link the Mafia and Hendrix.

As for Jeffrey's view, he always said he, too, had been cheated. In an unpublished interview conducted shortly after Hendrix died, Jeffrey said the apparent rip-offs began after Eric Burdon signed a management contract with Yameta. Jeffrey said: "I examined it, his attorney examined it, my attorney examined it, and it seemed okay for him to do so. For whatever reason—we're still not sure what happened—either this corporation in the Bahamas fucked up and were inefficient or they flipped some money off. . . ."

Either way, why did Jeffrey continue the relationship with Yameta after he'd

stopped managing Burdon? Yameta got a quarter of a million dollars when the Hendrix recording contract with Warners was renegotiated, and Jeffrey got more than \$150,000 of that; was that "salary"? Where next? Well, Dicker said in parting, "If you really want to get into the situation with Jimi, Steve Weiss is the guy."

Weiss is the lean and sort of rawboned former lawyer for Jack Paar who represented Herman's Hermits, the Rascals, the Yardbirds and Dusty Springfield before Hendrix, and Led Zeppelin since. In the hall outside his spacious Madison Avenue office there is a large framed photograph of Hendrix with the inscription: "To Steve, who understands . . . Love Happiness & Peace of Mind to you forever, Jimi." Underneath were three little hand-drawn hearts.

Weiss opened with a speech. "As an attorney," he said, "I have no idea what you are going to ask me. As an attorney, if there are matters that arise during the interview which would not be proper for me to discuss or at least for me to discuss without getting permission from the estate, I hope that you will not feel that I am being uncooperative."

That out of the way, he performed much the same dance that Dicker did. Except that now astonishment was added to frustration. He said he knew nothing of Yameta, denied that he'd been paid anything by the company, although there were canceled checks made out to him totaling \$21,000 in the files of Yameta in Nassau. And what of his handling both artist and manager at the same time? "I never represented Michael Jeffrey in any situation," he said, "that conflicted with my representation of Jimi Hendrix."

For half an hour, Weiss threw out incredible statements, answering most questions with a phrase or two and no more, dodging many questions entirely, claiming only Henry Steingarten could help with those. Like Leon Dicker, Steve Weiss seemed to subscribe to the theory that it was less suspicious to grant an interview and then say nothing than to deny the request entirely.

Weiss' former partner, Henry Steingarten, who was Hendrix's personal attorney after Weiss, took the opposite tack. "I have consistently refused to become involved in any manner and to any extent with articles and books on the life of Jimi Hendrix," he wrote in a brief letter. "Furthermore, I do not believe I have anything which would be of interest."

There was another lawyer's name on many of those letters copied from the Yameta files. This was Barry Reiss, a young associate of Steingarten and Weiss who'd worked his way through law school as a trumpet player. He was willing to talk about Hendrix's generosity and how amused the guitarist was when other musicians began to copy him, but Reiss wouldn't say much about the law firm. And when the subject of Yameta came up, he asked that the tape recorder be turned off for what he termed "a vague recollection."

Reiss said some U.S. tax advisers hired by Hendrix told him to leave Yameta because it wasn't working for him. "It didn't cost Jimi anything," he said, "but it did him no good to use a British tax shelter." To all specific questions about Yameta and Hendrix's legal representation, he said nothing: "I was just in the office, so to speak, doing what was asked

It was clear the foundation was being run with big money in mind. One benefit ran for two days and offered more than 20 bands. Rarely was a band paid—most were talked into appearing either in tribute or for 'valuable exposure.'

of me. I really don't want to comment on what the internal relationships were. If Steve or Henry asked me to do something, I did it."

That left John Hillman, the socially noticeable, middle-40ish British solicitor who set up Yameta to begin with. He owned pieces of several Bahamian holding companies and was a respected Londoner known for his expertise in taxation and international law. According to Leon Dicker and Sir Guy Henderson, Hillman was The Man in the thick of the plot. But, of course, Hillman was not available for comment.

PART THREE

THE HEIR

JIMI HENDRIX was dead less than a month when his father was approached by a lawyer, William Lockett. The elder Hendrix knew Lockett, trusted him. Lockett said he had some friends who wanted to start a nonprofit memorial foundation.

The friends were Gary Culver and Buck Austin, two Seattle lawyers who were supposed to put up some of the money; Harold Greenlin of Los Angeles, owner of a small chain of skin-flick movie houses in California; and a bearded, balding fat man called Tiny Becker, one of Greenlin's theater operators who came from San Francisco to run the foundation.

Mr. Hendrix, accompanied by a family friend, Mrs. Freddie Mae Gautier, attended a meeting at which photographs of some land outside Seattle were produced. Mr. Hendrix was told that rock festivals would be held there and a museum would be erected and a campground would be established where underprivileged young blacks could come without charge. All Mr. Hendrix had to do, they said, to make this dream come true was sign a

paper giving the foundation the right to use his son's name.

Mr. Hendrix was nodding his head, saying it all sounded good to him when Mrs. Gautier interrupted. What's in it for Mr. Hendrix? she asked.

Mr. Hendrix said the lawyers then produced "more cash money than I ever saw before. There was ten hundred-dollar bills. And they said something about a salary, after the money started to come in."

Mr. Hendrix signed a contract and a receipt for the cash.

The contract sold "To the Jimi Hendrix Memorial Foundation, Inc., a Washington corporation to be formed at once by Raymond Becker, the exclusive right to use the name of his deceased son, Jimi, in the promotion of a permanent memorial to him and for any other use whatsoever deemed necessary or advantageous to the aforementioned corporation."

As part of the agreement, Mr. Hendrix was named vice-president and Mrs. Gautier was named a director. But the foundation's operation was given totally to Tiny Becker, the president. Soon after that a suite of six offices was rented in downtown Seattle.

A Portland, Oregon, carnival booking agent named Ted Coates was brought in to run the phone room. "They had about a dozen, 15 telephones in one of the rooms," Mr. Hendrix recalled. "They had people to sell advertisements in a *Jimi Hendrix Picture Book*." William Lockett had Mr. Hendrix sign a sworn affidavit stating that Coates and his boys weren't being compensated, a requirement for the foundation to get a city permit to operate a charity. It wasn't true. Later Coates said the pitchmen were working on a 25% commission, while he and another room manager were splitting an additional 20%.

The pitch was direct. The Official Jimi Hendrix Memorial Foundation Souvenir Photograph Album offered a half-million guaranteed circulation. The foundation was said to own 146 acres of land which were to be dedicated to the state within three years as the Jimi Hendrix Memorial Park. Half a dozen music scholarships were promised.

By now, Becker and his foundation were attracting some attention in the Seattle newspapers. But when Becker was asked about the mysterious 146-acre parcel of land, no one challenged the foundation president's answer: "We can't disclose the location at this time, because we're trying to buy the adjacent land and don't want to drive the price up." Later, Walter Wright, an investigative reporter for Seattle's *Post Intelligencer*, exposed, in a series of articles, all the sordid details of the Jimi Hendrix Memorial Fund.

It was clear that the foundation was being run with big money in mind, but first Becker had to learn his job. The first benefit show was held in Seattle's now defunct Phoenix Club, a second in the



Leo Branton (left), the lawyer; Michael Jeffrey (top), the manager; Johnny Winter, Buddy Miles and Noel Redding

much larger Eagles Hall, which held about 2500 uncomfortably. This one ran nonstop for two days and offered more than 20 bands. Rarely was a band paid—most of them were talked into appearing either in tribute to the dead guitarist or for the "valuable exposure." Still, the shows were well attended. Teenagers hired by Becker sold buttons and pillows and bumperstickers that said *JIMI HENDRIX LIVES—FOR THE JIMI HENDRIX MEMORIAL FOUNDATION*. Memberships were sold for \$10 or \$20.

Mr. Hendrix attended both shows. Each time, he was lead onstage by the 300-pound Becker and introduced to the audience. It was quite an experience for the

quiet gardener. But what he remembers most vividly is the lack of backstage organization, the friction between his "partners": "They were squabbling over the money. It was a mess."

Indeed it was. Ted Coates had a fight with Becker, quit and went to the police. Another bitter employee told the state's Department of Labor that the foundation was breaking minimum-wage laws. The city permit to conduct a charitable fundraising operation was canceled. About the same time, city license inspectors discovered Becker's police record, which included an arrest for trying to exchange \$785 worth of stolen airline tickets—an arrest made in Seattle the same week that Becker was named president of the Jimi Hendrix Memorial Foundation.

Lockett immediately got Mr. Hendrix to sign another affidavit and told officials he had fired Tiny Becker. Mr. Hendrix, he said, was the new president. That wasn't true, either, but he was given a temporary permit anyway.



WIDE WORLD

When Mr. Hendrix went to the foundation offices a few days after the last benefit everything was gone, even the little rubber stamps of Jimi's face. There wasn't any money, maybe never was.

The benefit shows continued and so did the telephone calls to businessmen. A third concert was held in the Tacoma, Washington, Sports Arena, a fourth in another Seattle club. But that last one wasn't advertised and attendance probably was insufficient to pay costs.

When Mr. Hendrix went to the offices a few days later everything was gone, even the unsold candy bars and the little rubber stamps of Jimi's face that were used to stamp the backs of hands at concerts. Next day, he and Mrs. Gautier went to City Hall and solemnly withdrew their application for a fundraising permit.

And what of the money? There wasn't any, maybe never was. Much earlier, a \$267 check written by Becker for city taxes bounced and Lockett had to make it up in cash. No one even knew how much money had been taken in; records simply were not kept.

It's been over five years since that last benefit show. Austin and Culver, who still practice law in Seattle, prefer not to talk to reporters and tell their friends that they never even got their investment back. Lockett was later indicted in connection with eight armed robberies and killed himself. Becker was shot to death by his wife.

Al Hendrix led the way from the front door into his suburban Seattle home. He'd just gotten home from his gardening route, and was still dressed in a worn checked shirt, baggy pants and a straw hat with a hole in the peak. He was surprisingly short, only 5'4" or 5'5"—Jimi had been six inches taller—and he moved with a jaunty, rolling gait.

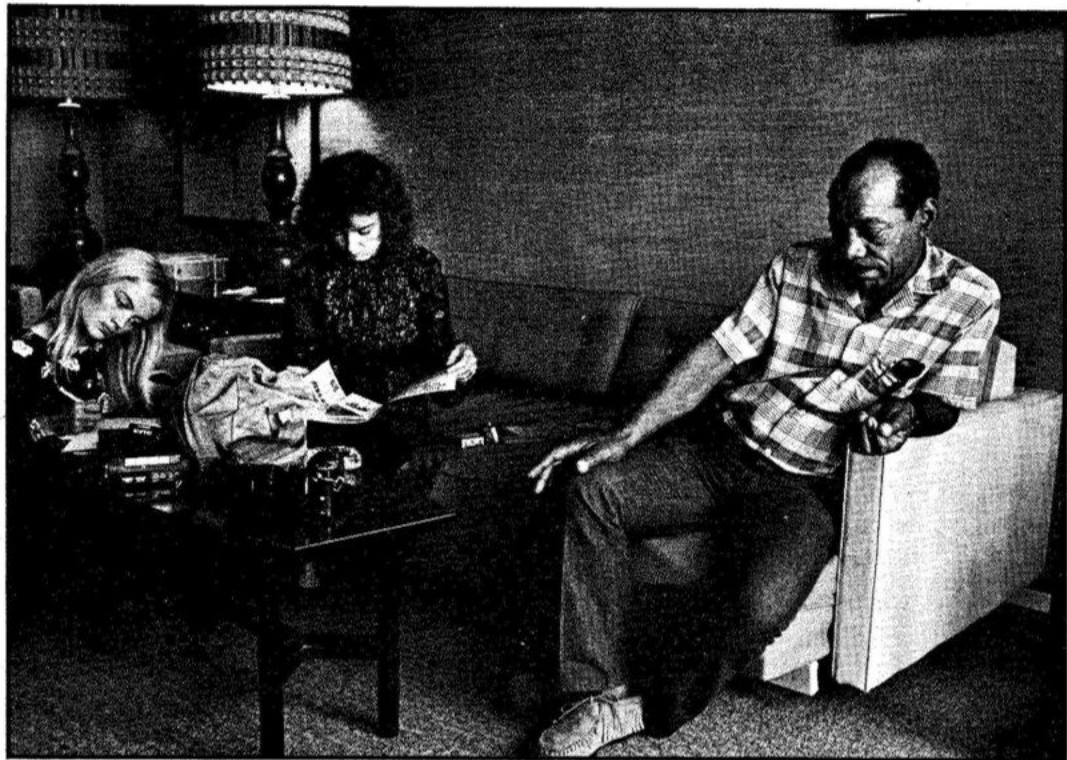
He paused near the wall where four gold record albums were hung, along with a dozen or so photographs, some of his son as a little boy, others showing him onstage. On another wall, an oil painting of Jimi was hung over the television set.

Mr. Hendrix walked downstairs into the finished basement where he had a wet bar, went to the refrigerator, withdrew a can of local beer and started to reminisce.

When his son died, he said, he went to New York to see his son's apartment and to sign some papers for Henry Steingarten, then still the estate's executor. Mr. Hendrix said he asked the lawyer to send the guitars and clothes, but only a few of the least expensive items ever arrived.

At the same time he was told there'd be no money. Only about \$20,000 had been found—the amount the guitarist had in his pockets when he died—and the U.S. government was asking ten times that in unpaid taxes.

Mr. Hendrix said he thought that was odd, because when he saw his son last, shortly before Jimi went to Hawaii to make *Rainbow Bridge* and then Europe, he "told me he had some money put away



somewhere. He was going to tell me more about it when he got back from Europe . . . but he didn't get back."

Mr. Hendrix removed his hat and placed it on the end of the bar. He had an open, friendly face, like his son's; you believed him. After a while he matter-of-factly told the story of the Jimi Hendrix Memorial Foundation. If he ever felt abused by the experience, he certainly was good-natured about it now.

"You know what happened after Becker disappeared? Austin and Culver and Lockett came back with another piece of paper for me to sign. I forget what they were going to call this one. It was another foundation. I said, 'Hell, no, you must think I'm some kind of fool.'"

Later, somebody else called from Texas, wanted to do something. "There've been quite a few," Mr. Hendrix said. "They all say 'nonprofit.' I say, 'Talk to my attorney.' I give them his phone number and that's the last I hear from any of them."

His attorney, of course, is Leo Branton. Mr. Hendrix met him when he went to Los Angeles to accept an award made to his son posthumously. One meeting and Branton said he'd get into it.

Soon after that, Mr. Hendrix made a second trip to New York, this time to meet the young lawyers Branton hired to handle

the estate, Ed Howard and Kenny Hagood.

"We had a meeting. They asked me what to do about the studio Jimi built. I said, 'Well, hell, I don't need no studio. . . .'"

It was then, Mr. Hendrix said, that his new lawyers "started raking the money in."

The small, stocky gardener laughed happily, went to the refrigerator and withdrew a second beer. Once upon a time, he said, he worked from dawn until dark to save enough money for a down payment on a little house. That was in 1967, when his son was just beginning to make it in England. "It wasn't much of a house," he said. The price was \$27,500.

Today Mr. Hendrix lives in a home that was built five years ago at a cost of \$110,000. It's on a double lot in a pleasant upper-middle-class neighborhood, has five bedrooms, five bathrooms, a three-car garage, two living areas sharing a common fireplace, and in the basement there's the wet bar, a billiard room, a ping-pong table, another parlor and fireplace.

"I'm on an allowance, I get so much a year," he said. "Leo [Branton] sends me papers to sign, he calls sometimes, lets me know what's going on. I leave it up to him."

Al Hendrix at home with friends after Jimi died

Was Mr. Hendrix ever concerned about the possibility that a lawyer might again take advantage?

He shrugged. "Everybody likes to get his finger in the pie," he said, smiling. "Leo, he told me I was well fixed for life."

(Branton said Al Hendrix is paid a "lifetime annuity" by Presentaciones Musicales, S.A., the firm he sold the unedited Hendrix tapes to.)

"Doesn't matter," Mr. Hendrix added. "It's just money that come to me. I still have my gardening."

"I have 15 people, some of them I've been doing their gardens for 20 years now. I do admit I been cutting back some. I don't work on Saturdays now, and only eight hours a day. I don't get up so early as I used to. I sleep in. But I wouldn't quit. I like the exercise. I like to get outside."

"When the money come in, Leo said I should get a new house over near the lake [Lake Washington], and I went over there but I don't think I could of got my truck in any of those garages."